

REMARKS

The Applicants wish to express their gratitude for the courtesies extended by the Examiner during the Interview of December 16, 2003. Consistent with the discussions and agreements reached in the Interview, the Applicants respectfully submit the foregoing amendments and following remarks.

Claims 1-12 and 15-25 are currently pending in the present Application, claims 13-14 having been withdrawn from consideration following the July 1, 2003 Restriction/Election Requirement.

Claim Rejections Under § 103(a): Claims 1-12 and 15-25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over admitted prior art in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,954,539 to Hornung (“Hornung”) and U.S. Patent No. 4,446,692 to Sonoda (“Sonoda”). The Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection on the grounds set forth below.

The Applicants have amended the claims in the manner discussed and agreed in the Interview to distinguish over the cited art. Specifically, independent claims 1, 15 and 23 have been amended to recite the present invention’s use of a belt formed from joined connection sections upon which the optical waveguide ferrules are detachably fixed (such as by molding in one-piece with a connection section). Thus, the independent claims now recite the limitation that “the connection sections form a belt on which the ferrules are detachably fixed.” These features were previously recited in various dependent claims and described in the present specification, and therefore no new matter has been entered. Consistent with these amendments, claims 2, 5, 16, 18 and 24

have been canceled, without prejudice to the subject matter therein, and their respective dependent claims 6, 8, 10-12, 16 and 25 have been amended to depend from the appropriate base claim.

As discussed in the Interview, neither Hornung nor Sonoda teach or suggest the present invention's forming an optical waveguide-carrying belt from connection sections upon which the ferrules are detachably fixed. Rather, these references teach only forming a belt by connecting their electrical connections to themselves. *See, e.g.*, Hornung Figs. 4, 8, 12; Sonoda Fig. 13. Thus, Hornung and Sonoda, either alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest the invention recited in amended claims 1, 15 or 23 under § 103(a).

For the foregoing reasons, the Applicants respectfully request the pending § 103(a) rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1, 3-4, 6-12, 15, 17, 19-23 and 25 are now in allowable form. Issuance of a Notice of Allowance for these claims is respectfully requested.

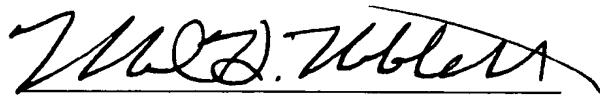
If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and

please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit
Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #080437/49710US).

Respectfully submitted,

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